

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

OMNOVA Solutions Inc.

Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Omnova Begins Thinking Lean

Client Profile:

OMNOVA - Performance Chemicals division, located in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, produces customized emulsion polymers using several specialty chemical applications, such as nonwovens, textiles, construction, floor care, and graphic arts. An estimated 39 employees work at this location.

Situation:

OMNOVA wanted to improve its production process to make a positive impact on quality, cost, and on-time delivery, while maximizing utilization of current resources, people, and equipment at this facility. The company hoped to achieve this goal by instituting simple, standardized production processes that increase the company's customer-service flexibility. OMNOVA contacted the Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MassMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance.

Solution:

MassMEP engaged OMNOVA in a lean implementation program featuring education and training projects leading to continuous improvement methods in targeted production areas. MassMEP began by leading OMNOVA through a Lean 101 seminar to teach the company the basics of lean philosophy and implementation. Then MassMEP conducted a value stream mapping exercise illustrating the present state of operations and identifying areas of improvement. OMNOVA utilized this learning to create improved conditions throughout the value stream, creating a foundation for continuous improvements in other production areas.

MassMEP then conducted a kaizen blitz focused on the 5S office organization principle. OMNOVA also redefined utilization of its raw materials storage space through an internal/external kanban program. The plan provided much-needed space for staging of packaged outgoing products while providing a systematic replenishment system with a key raw material supplier. This activity created better utilization of cash reserves that otherwise would be designated for bulk raw material inventory not immediately consumed. OMNOVA continues to measure the impacts of its training and is seeing improved workflow, improved visibility and utilization of raw materials, and improved utilization of cash. The company now keeps an eye toward the future, constantly searching for opportunities to increase capacity to meet the growing demand for its products.

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Results:

Increased finished goods by 55 percent, from 1.7 million pounds to 2.6 million pounds over six months.

Reduced work-in-process from \$46,300 per month to \$7,800 per month.

Reduced raw material inventory from \$451,000 to \$196,000.

Reduced inventory supplies by 48 percent.

Workforce reduced by 13 percent through attrition.

Testimonial:

"To be successful in the marketplace as a small volume producer, we must have a customer focus. The Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership's lean training is helping us turn this into a competitive advantage. Our road to lean is only beginning. There are many steps we must take to continually improve facility performance--but a solid foundation has been put in place."

Wesley Reid, Director of Operations